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18 September 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: The West German Elections and Soviet Tactics in Germany

1. It has been repeatedly estimated, most recently in SE-47, that the USSR's actions and propaganda on Germany were aimed at weakening support in West Germany for rearmament and association with the Western Alliance through EDC. Adenauer's decisive electoral victory must have led the Kremlin to recognize that this policy has failed, and that EDC can no longer be defeated in West Germany. Presumably, the Soviet leaders are re-examining their German policy in the light of this development. It is therefore appropriate to inquire what the probable results of this re-examination are likely to be, and whether a revision of present estimates on Soviet policy in Germany is indicated.

2. Since the Kremlin leaders are most unlikely simply to abandon their aim to defeat EDC, they probably consider that the following alternative courses of action are open to them:

a. The campaign to defeat EDC can be pursued with renewed emphasis in France and Italy, where the parliamentary obstacles to ratification remain formidable. Particularly in France, the Kremlin might believe, a more intensive agitation by Communist and front instruments could be effective in view of indications that the elections stimulated new fears in France of West Germany's growing strength and unity. Diplomatic approaches to France are also possible, in fact have already been made in tentative form in recent months. Offers to relieve the pressure on France in Indochina might be employed effectively in such bilateral bargaining.

b. The Kremlin leaders could decide to reopen Four Power discussions with a view only to prolonging them to delay EDC. If they did so, they would probably bring to the talks a negotiating position somewhat more flexible than that forecast in their last note on Germany. They would otherwise run the risk that a Four Power meeting would be short-lived and that a breakdown attributable to their intransigence would actually further the progress of EDC.

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g. It would be possible also for the Kremlin to adopt a policy of menace, to threaten that West German rearmament would not be "tolerated". To implement this line the Kremlin could move additional troops into East Germany, could expand its arms programs in the USSR and the satellites, including East Germany. It could also make East Germany a party to the mutual aid treaties now in force among the other Bloc states. Renewed pressure on Berlin would presumably be part of these tactics. (There have been no indications thus far of any change in Soviet tactics in Berlin.)

g. Finally, the Kremlin could decide to enter Four Power discussions with a view to actually reaching a settlement on the basis of a reunified but neutralized Germany.

3. Among these alternatives, 2 c and d obviously represent the highest cards the Kremlin leaders have to play. If we believed that in consequence of the German election results they might now decide to play either of these, then a new estimate would be urgently needed. If, however, we believe that 2 a and 2 b are their more likely choices, either singly or in combination, then the forecasts of our present estimates — NIE-61 and SE-47 — remain valid. NIE-95 in the draft now before the IAC reaffirms these estimates, and the results of the German elections did enter into the discussions of the agency representatives on the relevant paragraphs of NIE-95.

4. There are compelling reasons for believing that the USSR will not shift its policy decisively in response to the West German election returns and that it will follow either or both of the courses indicated under 2 a and 2 b. The Soviet leaders are likely to believe that EDC still faces considerable difficulties before it reaches the stage of implementation, and that there will still be opportunities to forestall it by political and diplomatic action. Even after its implementation begins, two to three years will be required to bring the projected German military contribution into being. Moreover, the grave internal crisis in France is likely to continue during this period and the implementation of EDC is likely to be threatened by continuing Franco-German problems.

5. On the other hand, if the Soviets now go over to 2 c above, they would in effect abandon at one stroke the conciliatory tactics which we have estimated represent an important shift in their tactics intended to continue for some time. A reversion to the former hard tactics would probably require that new arms burdens be imposed on the already overstrained economies of the Bloc states.

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It would also create serious morale and control problems arising from the necessity of recalling the promises so recently made for a better life "in the next two to three years." Above all, a policy of threat at this juncture would run the risk of giving EDC new impetus in Western Europe rather than deterring it. As for the course listed under 2 d, the reasons given in previous estimates for believing that the Kremlin would not wish to abandon its hold on East Germany do not seem to be invalidated by the West German election returns alone. They may be reinforced.

6. The courses of action which the Kremlin leaders seem most likely to adopt in the present phase of the contest over Germany are, therefore, 2 a and 2 b — that is, they will concentrate their efforts on political action to defeat EDC, particularly in France, and they may enter Four Power discussions as a delaying maneuver. These are substantially the courses of action anticipated in existing estimates, and therefore no revision of them is indicated at this time. It may be pointed out also that in their reply with-in the next few weeks to the invitation to a Foreign Ministers meeting on October 15 the Soviets will themselves provide us with indications of how the West German election results have affected their thinking on tactics to be pursued in Germany. At this time we do not have enough evidence of the USSR's reaction to the West German election to support a new estimate.

7. We therefore consider that a special estimate would not be useful at this time. However, there seem to be excellent reasons for undertaking a longer-term estimate on the subject of probable Soviet courses of action with respect to Germany. In such an estimate, particular attention should be given to the probable Soviet reactions to the rearmament of West Germany, prospects for which under one guise or another have been advanced by the Adenauer victory. It seems most likely that at some phase of the implementation of EDC, or whatever other scheme may be devised to get West Germany rearmed, the Soviets will go over to one of the courses of action described under 2 c and 2 d. The estimate suggested ought to answer the question whether the Soviets will ultimately, after they have exhausted all other possibilities for preventing West German rearmament, then decide to play their highest cards, that is, either to take aggressive counteraction or to negotiate seriously for a unified neutralized Germany. Such an estimate should indicate not only which of these courses is the more likely, but also at what stage of the progress toward a rearmed West Germany either is likely to be adopted.

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8. Recommendation

That an estimate on Soviet Policy toward Germany be scheduled for completion in the first quarter of 1954. (Evidence received within the next few weeks will largely determine the need for reconsidering this schedule.)

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